

Message Text

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S/S-O- MR. MACFARLANE

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P 111620Z MAR 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 059175

EXDIS

FOL TEL SENT ACTION LONDON FROM SECSTATE DTD 11 MAR 1976 QUOTE

O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 059175

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, US, UK

SUBJECT: RFE/RL TRANSMITTERS: VISIT OF DAVID ABSHIRE

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARMITAGE MET WITH BRITISH COUNSELOR SCOTT ON MARCH 10 TO DISCUSS THE PLANNED VISIT TO LONDON OF BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING (BIB) CHAIRMAN DAVID ABSHIRE AND TO PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION ON RADIO FREE EUROPE (RFE)/RADIO LIBERTY (RL) TRANSMITTER PROBLEMS.

2. ARMITAGE POINTED OUT THAT THE OUTLOOK FOR CONTINUED TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE IBERIAN PENINSULA WAS UNCERTAIN. ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL HAD IMPROVED RECENTLY, STATUS OF TRANSMITTERS IN SPAIN IS QUESTIONABLE. WE ARE TALKING WITH THE SPANISH AND GENERALLY HOPEFUL ABOUT
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GETTING AN EXTENSION OF THE PRESENT LEASE. HOWEVER,

THE GOS HAS USED THE TERM "EXTENSION" RATHER THAN "RENEWAL," WHICH SUGGESTS WE WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO MAKE OTHER ARRANGEMENTS. ABSHIRE, WHO IS GOING TO MADRID NEXT WEEK, WILL PUSH FOR A LONG-TERM EXTENSION BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WILL SUCCEED. EVEN IF GOS

WERE TO AGREE TO STRETCH OUT THE LEASE FOR 3 YEARS, WE WOULD STILL FACE A DILEMMA WHEN THAT PERIOD RAN OUT.

3. THEREFORE, WE ARE ASKING OUR EMBASSY IN LONDON TO ARRANGE AN APPOINTMENT FOR ABSHIRE WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN ON MARCH 22 OR 23 TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF RFE/RL TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE UK. ARMITAGE NOTED THAT BIB BOARD MEMBER JOHN ROCHE HAS ALREADY BEEN IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH MR. CALLAGHAN AND THE HOME SECRETARY ABOUT THIS MATTER. ABSHIRE WILL WANT TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT THAT IS POLITICALLY MANAGEABLE TO ALL CONCERNED.

4. ARMITAGE SAID ABSHIRE HAS USG AUTHORIZATION FOR HIS APPROACH. BIB WOULD NEED ADDITIONAL FUNDS WERE IT TO UNDERTAKE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW TRANSMITTER FACILITIES, BUT, BASED ON OUR READING OF THE SITUATION ON THE HILL, FUNDS WOULD PROBABLY BE AVAILABLE.

5. SCOTT SAID HE COULD NOT PREDICT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S REACTION TO OUR PROPOSAL AND CITED THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WHICH MIGHT ENTER INTO THE DECISION:

(1) LEGAL AND TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES REGARDING BBC'S SHARING OF FACILITIES, (2) THE POSSIBLE EFFECT ON BBC'S IMAGE IN EASTERN EUROPE OF ASSOCIATION WITH RFE AND RL, AND (3) DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEM IN OBTAINING PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL.

6. SCOTT ASKED WHETHER WE HAD CONSIDERED SITES OTHER THAN IN THE UK. ARMITAGE SAID WE HAD TALKED INFORMALLY WITH THE WEST GERMANS. HOWEVER, FRG IS NOT SUITABLE LOCATION FOR SHORT-WAVE TRANSMISSIONS.

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7. SCOTT SAID THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY OR, IF HE IS NOT AVAILABLE, WITH HIS DEPUTY. THE MINISTRY WOULD ASSURE THAT ALL RELEVANT FACTORS WERE BROUGHT TO MR. CALLAGHAN'S ATTENTION SO THAT HE COULD "EXPRESS A VIEW" ON OUR PROPOSAL. SCOTT THEN ASKED WHETHER WE MIGHT CONSIDER CHANGING THE NAMES OF THE RADIOS IF THE BRITISH WERE TO GO ALONG WITH OUR REQUEST.

HE SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THIS MIGHT MAKE THE OPERATION
MORE PALATABLE FROM A POLITICAL STANDPOINT. ARMITAGE
SAID WE HAD NOT LOOKED INTO THIS POSSIBILITY BUT PERHAPS
ABSHIRE WOULD LOOK AT IT IF IT WOULD FACILITATE POSITIVE
UK RESPONSE.
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